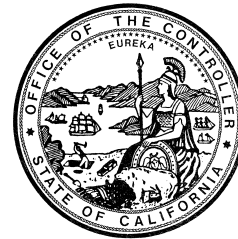


# News Release



***Controller of the State of California - Kathleen Connell***

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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

## ***SUPPORTERS CONVERGE AT RALLY FOR CONNELL'S AB 760***

***Connell, Migden and Advocates Urge Enactment of Lifesaving Bill***

SACRAMENTO, August 20, 1997 -- Breast cancer patients and supporters convened with State Controller Kathleen Connell and Assemblywoman Carole Migden (D-San Francisco) at a rally on the west steps of the Capitol to urge the Governor's signature on a lifesaving breast cancer treatment bill. The bill, AB 760, passed both the Assembly and Senate but faces a veto threat from the Governor.

"This issue is too important for complacency. We must confront the Governor's threat to veto!" Connell declared to rally-goers. "Women with breast cancer are in a daily struggle for their lives! Many of us here have witnessed it up close and real. We know scores of California women who cannot face a delay in fighting this deadly disease. Each day lost seriously impacts their survival chances."

Sponsored by Connell and authored by Migden, AB 760 entitles a woman with breast cancer to a prompt, independent review following the denial of a physician-recommended treatment by her insurance company or HMO. Currently, many women must file lawsuits to gain access to ABMT therapy after the denial. Connell called it "unconscionable" that insurance company administrators could have more influence over a patient's treatment than her physician. "Non-medical personnel should not be able to impede the delivery of any treatment to aid patients in suffering. Women with breast cancer should focus their energies on fighting the disease, not the insurance company."

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*Connell Addresses Rally/2-2-2*

ABMT is used only in severe situations. The patient's bone marrow is removed and then she is exposed to extremely high doses of radiation. After the treatment, which would have killed the bone marrow if left in the body, the marrow is re-introduced back into the patient. Currently, even with their doctor's recommendation, many women are denied coverage (primarily due to its high cost), which results in litigation.

"It's completely appalling to find women suffering from severe breast cancer spending more time in court rooms, then therapy rooms," said Connell. "We're here to strongly urge the Governor to sign AB 760 so never again will an insurance company come between a woman, her doctor and a cure." Breast cancer patient Kathleen Miller, who testified earlier this year at a hearing on the bill before the Assembly health committee added: "When you're ill and fighting the disease is when you need help the most. I was completely devastated that an insurance company had more control over my life span than my doctor did."

The rally was also attended by representatives and official supporters from breast cancer advocacy groups including: *American Cancer Society, California Nurses Association, Save Ourselves of Sacramento, Women of Color Breast Cancer Support Project*, Sacramento chapter of the *National Association of Women Business Owners* and *Council on the Status of Women*.

The two key provisions of the AB 760 are as follows:

- Any individual with breast cancer, whose physician recommends ABMT or other commonly recognized breast cancer treatment, but whose HMO or health insurer denies coverage for it, would have **prompt access to an independent, expedited review of the coverage decision**;
- If the independent review panel determines that the patient should receive ABMT, then **the HMO or health insurer must cover it**.

Last year Connell led the effort to expand ABMT coverage to the more than 400,000 women insured by the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS), which utilizes 22 health plans in its government-sponsored health care program. If signed by the Governor, AB 760 could become law as soon as January 1, 1998.

Breast cancer is the most commonly occurring cancer in women. It's the second most common cancer killer among women, and the leading cause of death among women 40-55. It is estimated that nearly 20,000 California women will be diagnosed with breast cancer for the first time in 1997. During the same period, approximately 5,000 California women will die of the cancer.